

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NICOSI 00507 231919Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 MCT-01 IO-13 /085 W
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R 231545Z FEB 78

FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7321
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L NICOSIA 0507

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, MPOL, PEPR, CY, EG
SUBJECT: CONSEQUENCES OF LARNACA INCIDENT

REF: NICOSIA 486 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY. GOC IS CONTINUING ATTEMPT TO LIMIT DAMAGE
TO CYPRIOT/EGYPTIAN RELATIONS AND TO ITS OWN IMAGE
CAUSED BY LARNACA INCIDENT. DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS
MAY BE MAINTAINED THROUGH INTEREST SECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU SO FAR HAS DECLINED TO COMMENT
ON REPORTS THAT GOE HAS DECIDED TO TERMINATE DIPLOMATIC
RELATIONS AND WITHDRAW RECOGNITION OF KYPRIANOU AS
PRESIDENT OF CYPRUS, SAYING ONLY THAT HE WILL WAIT TO
SEE FULL OFFICIAL TEXTS OF SADAT'S SPEECH. HE HAS,
HOWEVER, ISSUED STATEMENT FEB 23 THROUGH PUBLIC
INFORMATION OFFICE (PIO) THAT AMBASSADORS ARE BEING
RECALLED BUT EMBASSIES WILL CONTINUE TO FUNCTION AT
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LOWER LEVEL. PIO INTERPRETED THIS TO USIS OFFICER
TO MEAN THAT RELATIONS WILL BE MAINTAINED THROUGH IN-
TEREST SECTIONS MANNED BY ONE LOW RANKING DIPLOMAT.
EGYPTIAN DCM CANNOT CONFIRM THIS BUT ADVISES US HE
IS AWAITING INSTRUCTIONS.

2. MEANWHILE, GOC HAS INITIATED LEGAL ACTION AGAINST ELEMENTS

OF THE PRESS FOR PUBLISHING "FALSE" ACCOUNTS OF LARNACA INCIDENT. ATTORNEY GENERAL ANNOUNCED FEB 22 THAT POLICE WERE INVESTIGATING WITH A VIEW TO BRING CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST REUTER'S NICOSIA CORRESPONDENT FOR TRANSMITTING FALSE INFORMATION IN CONTRAVENTION OF THE CRIMINAL CODE. WE UNDERSTAND THIS CHARGE INVOLVES REUTERS ACCOUNT THAT CYPRIOT SECURITY FORCES DISARMED AND EXECUTED ONE OF EGYPTIAN COMMANDOS IN COLD BLOOD. INVESTIGATION IS ALSO BEING CONDUCTED AGAINST FIGHT-WING NEWSPAPER SIMERINI FOR REPORTING THAT SECURITY FORCES CARRIED OUT A "MASSACRE" AT LARNACA. ANOTHER NEWS STORY BY NICOSIA-BASED JOURNALIST JOE FITCHETT THAT PALESTINIAN GUERRILLAS FOUGHT ON GOC SIDE (WASHINGTON POST FEB 21, INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE FEB 22) WAS BRANDED BY PIO AS MALICIOUS AND FALSE. GOC INITIALLY THREATENED AN "INVESTIGATION" BUT HAS DROPPED THIS AT EMBASSY'S STRONG RECOMMENDATION.

IN RELATED DEVELOPMENT, PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU ANNOUNCED FEB 22 HE WAS SUSPENDING FROM DUTY DEPUTY CHIEF OF POLICE PAVLOS STOKKOS FOR "COMMUNICATING FALSE INFORMATION REGARDING THE EVENTS AT LARNACA AIRPORT AND FOR NEGLIGENCE IN THE EXECUTION OF HIS DUTIES." NO DETAILS OF CASE AGAINST STOKKOS HAVE BEEN RELEASED.

4. AS MORE FACTS EMERGE, SUSPICIONS ARE GROWING THAT GOC MISHANDLING OF SITUATION CONTRIBUTED TO TRAGIC OUTCOME.
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(SEPTEL ON ATTITUDES.) MOVES AGAINST PRESS INDICATE GOVERNMENT IS WORRIED FULLER DISCLOSURES WILL BE EVEN MORE HARMFUL. POINTS ON WHICH GOVERNMENT APPEAR MOST VULNERABLE ARE ITS CLAIMS THAT NO CONCESSIONS WERE MADE TO HIJACKERS (FONMIN CHRISTOPHIDES HAS VERIFIED TO AMBASSADOR THAT THIS IS NOT TRUE), THAT PLO WAS NOT INVOLVED IN FIGHTING, AND THAT EGYPTIANS HAD NO REASON TO DOUBT THAT FORCE WOULD BE USED TO BLOCK THEIR INTERVENTION. AN UGLIER ASPECT BEGINNING TO EMERGE IS QUESTION WHETHER, AFTER FIGHTING BEGAN, CYPRIOT FORCES USED UNNECESSARY BRUTALITY IN STOPPING EGYPTIAN ACTION. CRAWFORD

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